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## THE THEORY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION<sup>(\*)</sup>

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### Chapter I.—Education in the Past.

#### PREFATORY.

N this age of revolution and self-styled reform, we are called upon to listen to protests against every form of existing reality. It is well that the rationale of all we have and are should pass under the scrutinizing review of the censor. But it is better to be able to see positive features than merely to be able to utter protests. Meanwhile the merely negative is better than the death of stagnation.

Our systems of education are no better than they should be,—far from it. But it does not follow that any change would be for the better. Only when we can see the full grounds for the reality of a system, can we then set about improving it wisely.

Text-book education has been the subject of much abuse for three-fourths of a century among educa-

tional men in Europe and this country. The great writers of the English language in the seventeenth century have anticipated most of the objections now urged. One will find admirable statements of them in Locke and Milton, and, what is more, he will find them so temperate as to escape the extremes into which our later day protests have developed.

It is with a view of throwing some light on this important question that I commence its study afar off at the beginnings of our system of school instruction, and trace its affiliation with the political history of modern times.

#### HISTORICAL.

Four hundred years ago this very year, Wm. Caxton, the first English printer, was engaged on the first of his works—the history of Raoul le Fevre—“Recueil des histoires de Troye.” The same year printing was introduced into Milan and Venice. It seems that the *invention* of the art of printing dates back of this

some thirty years, and that the firm of Johann Faust and Gutenberg commenced the business of printing books in the city of Mentz in the year 1450. The epoch is a notable one in history.

Three years after the partnership of Faust-Gutenberg, Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks, and the Eastern Empire closed its career. The "Wars of the Roses" depopulated England of her nobility to such an extent that the royal power rose nearly to absolutism in the dynasty of kings that followed, and in the next reaction, the power of the Commons came uppermost. In Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella united their crowns, and drove out the last vestige of Moorish power from Europe the same year that "Genoese Columbus launched his adventurous fleet into the Western ocean." The Medici family were at the height of their power in Florence, and Lorenzo the Magnificent ascended the throne the same year that Caxton completed the history we have named. Under his reign were born the great Michael Angelo and the great Raphael. Marcius Ficinus, the reviver of the profound study of Plato and the Platonists of Alexandria, was his schoolmaster.

What with the revival of learning and the discovery of new worlds, the mastery over the Moslem, the invention of printing, and the bloom of romantic art, the "Time River," as Goethe calls it, was indeed swollen to overflowing, and in the age following there arose in Europe the modern States system, and the "Balance of Power" developed through

the wars of Charles the Fifth with Francis the First and Henry the Eighth. At this epoch appeared the REFORMATION, and the new impulse toward independence of authority. Luther, Erasmus and Melancthon appear at the same time as Copernicus, with the "true system of the Universe," and Roger Ascham, the schoolmaster, teaching Greek to Queen Elizabeth.

With the spread of the art of printing came the cheapening of books and the stimulus to popular education. According to Diesterweg, the eminent German educator, "the present system of common or public schools—that is, schools which are open to all children under certain regulations—dates from the discovery of printing, in 1436, when books began to be furnished so cheaply that the poor could buy them." He remarks: "Especially after Martin Luther had translated the Bible into German, and the desire to possess and understand that invaluable book became universal, did there also become universal the desire to know how to read. Men sought to learn, not only for the sake of reading the Scriptures, but also to be able to read and sing the psalms and to learn the catechism. For this purpose schools for children were established which were essentially reading-schools. Reading was the first and principal study: next came singing, and then memorizing texts, songs, and the catechism. At first the ministers taught; but afterwards the duty was turned over to the inferior church officers, the choristers and sextons. Their duties as choristers and sextons

were paramount, and as schoolmasters only secondary. The children paid a small monthly fee, no more being thought necessary, since the schoolmaster derived a salary from the church."

The mode of instruction at this early period of public school history is characterized by Diesterweg in the following words: "Each child read by himself; the simultaneous method (that of classes) was not yet known. One after another stepped up to the table where the master sat. He pointed out one letter at a time, and named it; the child named it after him; he drilled him in recognizing and remembering each. Then they took letter by letter of the words, and by getting acquainted with them in this way the child gradually learned to read. This was a difficult method for him. Years usually passed before any facility had been acquired; many did not learn in four years. It was imitative and purely mechanical labor on both sides. To understand what was read was seldom thought of. The syllables were pronounced with equal force, and reading was a monotonous affair. The children drawled out texts of scripture, psalms and the catechism from beginning to end. As for the actual meaning of the words they uttered, they knew almost nothing of it." This, with "stern severity and cruel punishments," completes his picture of that stage of the school system.\*

But the movement thus begun was no superficial one; it was wide and

deep as all European civilization, and it signified nothing less than the complete and full emancipation of each and every individual from all species of external authority. All institutions of society were to be born again, and from their Palingenesia were to spring the humanitarian outgrowths of the present and the future. National literatures arose; three generations of men contested the new ideas, first with words, then with bitter persecutions, and then came the Thirty Years' War, with its final treaty, the peace of Westphalia, wherein the States system, which began to develop in the time of Charles Fifth, now got fully recognized, and with it free individuality took a new status.

Out of one solution forth steps a new problem, and that with frightful portent. By the light of the new principle of individuality, which took the form of the "right of private judgment," the old basis of society in Europe looked hideously empty, and a sham throughout. To a generation of Newtons, Lockes, and Leibnitz's, succeed a generation of Bolingbrokes, Swifts, Rousseaus, Montesquieus, and these again are followed by such as Hume, Voltaire, Diderot, Lessing, and Goethe. The French Revolution is inevitable, and an immense explosion rends the face of European civilization, threatening to merge in one red ruin all the landmarks built up for a thousand years. But "History is only a conflict of ideas, and the victory of the deeper one." Out of the obscurity, when the smoke cleared away, appeared again the same humanity, only with a stronger tendency

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\*This, and the passages from Rousseau, are quoted from translations given in *Baruard's Journal*.

than ever to realize the possibilities of the individual. In place of the cramping formulism which had first prevailed in the school-room, and which for two centuries had improved very little, on account of the wars which were constantly occurring, now a new spirit came in. It was the spirit we call Pestalozzian, and traces directly to Rousseau. The positive idea of this reform has been stated thus : “The child should be educated,—not for a trade or profession, *but for the common and absolute state of man!* Should not, therefore, subject himself to any thraldom of habit, but be independent of everything about him, and master of himself.” *Human nature* is distinctly recognized as an ideal of expanded culture. “Individuality must be held sacred, and carefully studied and encouraged.” All mechanical methods are eschewed,—the teacher endeavors to excite the pupil to self-activity, and thereby render him independent of all assistance.

These great ideas mark the epoch of a clear consciousness of the true province of pedagogy. They are fundamental, and universally recognized by the great educators of Europe and America.

But, like all great formative ideas, the first realizations of the same are prone to be self-contradictory. It is the province of all great national ideas to find, after manifold experiments, the fit instruments for their realization. When this is accomplished they become victorious. At first they are liable to select the old instrumentalities which have been created by the national ideas already

worn out. Then the new idea suffers defeat, and must try new means, until at last it hits upon the true armor—the steel of its own forging, and with this it is invincible—for the time.

Our late civil war furnishes too pertinent an example to be passed by in silence. There was a new outgrowth of the humanitarian idea, which had found the instrumentality of its realization in *productive industry*. Its strength lay in mechanic invention, thoroughly subordinated to that system of industry. In the war one party said : “ I will have none of it, but I will hold by that stage of society whose instrument is serfdom.” The result of the first six months’ struggle was a self-contradiction on the part of the South, for, in order to carry on the contest equally, it was obliged to establish mechanic industries in every village ; without these it could not be independent of foreigners. Thus it was conquered in its idea before it yielded to the force of arms. Both sides of the nation were really in the same stage of humanitarianism, but one had preceded the other in discovering the true and proper instrument for its realization. Now both see it in the same light. It is because of this inevitable mistake of instrumentalities that we are forced in this essay to speak so much of the system of “Text-Book Education.” It was the most natural thing imaginable that happened in the case of the new and better spirit which came to be recognized in Pestalozzianism.

#### ROUSSEAU’S INFLUENCE.

The two wings of Rousseau’s

school—if I may so express it—are represented in Basedow and Pestalozzi. The former is the extreme disciple of his master, and tends always to the grossest naturalism, while Pestalozzi is moderated ever by his deep instincts and religious culture. But both antagonize themselves against the very appliances which Reason has elaborated for her realization. The printed book is thrown aside with contempt, and the living voice of the teacher substituted therefor to an extent far from justifiable.

It is the true rationale of text-book education to which I would call attention here; and this I would urge with more zeal for the reason that the question is, to a great extent, before the mind of American educators to-day, and is the source of manifold experiments, which may prove expensive in the end.

This topic forms a leading one in a discussion of the distinctive features of school education in America, as contrasted with the methods in vogue in Europe.

From the date of the publication of “Lienhard and Gertrud,” by Pestalozzi, the world has borne in mind the invectives against books and the art of printing. All the evils existing in society have been referred to the deficient state of education, and this again to the deficient modes of teaching which have arisen from the art of printing. But the root of all this objection to printing lies deeper: it is, as we have intimated, the effect of the writings of Rousseau, who elevates a state of nature over a state of culture. In 1749, at the age of thirty-

seven, Rousseau made his first successful literary adventure, by writing an answer to a prize question proposed by the Academy of Dijon: “Whether the progress of the Arts and Sciences has tended to the purification of manners and morals.” “At the suggestion of Diderot, who reminded him of the greater notoriety which he could gain on the wrong side, he took the negative, and found his line of argument exactly adapted to his modes of thought and feeling.” He wrote a violent, brilliant and eloquent denunciation of civilized life, and at once found himself famous as a “censor of civilization.” If any one has doubts as to the origin of most that is called Pestalozzianism, let him hear Rousseau talk in his “Emile.” “The pedagogues,” says he, “teach children words, nothing but words, and no real knowledge.” “Children should not learn by rote, not even La Fontaine’s Fables.”

“Reading is the great misery of children. Emile must, in his twelfth year, scarcely know what a book is.”

“What the human mind receives is conveyed through the senses; the senses are the basis of the intellectual. Our feet, our hands, our eyes, first teach us philosophy.”

“No writings are proper for a boy; no eloquence or poetry; he has no business with feeling or taste.”

“Geographical instruction should begin with the house and place of abode. The pupil should draw maps of the neighborhood, to learn how they are made, and what they show.”

“Robinson Crusoe might constitute for a long time the entire library of a child.”

"The boy should do nothing at the word ; nothing is good to him except what he himself recognizes as good. By your wisdom you rob him of his mother wit ; he becomes accustomed always to be led, and to be only a machine in the hands of others. To require obedience of the child means to require that when grown up he shall be credulous,—shall be made a fool of."

"Do the opposite of what is usual, and you will almost always do right."

In the principles embodied in these quotations, one recognizes the confusion which reigned in Rousseau's mind as to the difference between nature in general, and human nature.

#### NATURE VS. HUMAN NATURE, OR THE SPIRITUAL: HOW MAN LIFTS HIMSELF BY AID OF INSTITUTIONS.

Nature, as existing in time and space, is the polar antithesis to the nature of man as spirit. Nay, man himself finds himself, as merely natural, his worst foe. By nature he is totally depraved : that is, he is a mere animal, and governed by animal impulses and desires, without ever rising to the ideas of reason. The greedy swine fight over the possession of the acorn that drops in their midst. It is a scene of pure violence. Everywhere the being of mere nature is impelled from without and has no freedom. For freedom begins with *making* one's nature, and not with mere unconscious habit. Out of the savage state man ascends by making himself new natures, one above the other : he realizes his ideas in institutions, and finds in these ideal worlds his real home and his true nature.

The state of nature is the savage

state. The state of *human* nature only exists as a product of culture. The world of nature in time and space exists for man or human nature, on condition that he have intelligence and skill to use it. The natural man who has not ascended above nature and become its master, is more unfortunate and unhappy than the brute. To achieve his destiny, to become aught that is distinctively human, he must be able to combine with his fellow men and sum up the results of the race in each individual. First there is practical combination—civil society organizing in such a manner that each man reaps the united effort of the entire community : the laborer who earns his dollar for the day's work being able to purchase therewith one dollar's worth of any or all the productions that human labor has wrought out. This kind of combination, whereby man lifts himself above himself as an individual (and to that extent transcends his mere finiteness), permits you and me to pursue quietly our vocations, and yet enjoy the fruition of the labor of the world. For each citizen, no matter how humble his birth or station, is made, by commerce, a centre from which ray out lines of communication and exchange to all industrial regions in the world. Each for all, and all for each ! The coal miner digging beneath the earth, and shut out from the light of day, does a work for all. Every stroke of his pickaxe affects to a certain extent the price of coal in all the markets of the world, and the price of coal affects the prices of all other commodities. The relation is reciprocal ; and every vessel that crosses the ocean, every

laborer on the distant plantation in the Indies or Brazil, or even by the far off Nile or Ganges, every manufacturer in Birmingham or Manchester, affects in turn the well-being of the coal miner in Illinois or Pennsylvania. He is comforted and cheered by the tea and coffee, nourished and sustained by the fruits, grains and spices, the cotton, and silk, and linen that have traveled to him around the earth. Nay, the very drugs that make life possible in our malarious climes, are grown from six to twelve thousand miles hence. Combination secures not only the participation in all products on the part of each, it secures that division of labor which results in the highest skill of elaboration.

THE REALM OF MIND, OR HOW MAN  
BY COMBINATION BECOMES OMNISCIENT.

But *practical* combination is not all nor indeed the chief item of importance in the elevation of man.

There is *theoretical* combination—the scholar by diligent study and much deep thinking being able to master for himself, one by one, the great thoughts that have ruled the world-history. The scientific solutions and generalizations relating to the great problem of human life—these are preserved in books, and each man, woman and child may partake, for in this realm too, all is for each, and each for all. The great Sphinx of nature has sat before man and asked him questions, looking up at him with quiet, stony looks, until despair has forced from him the solution, or else driven him to death. For every solution in the shape of scientific discovery, or ethical maxim, has been

wrought out only through grimdest toil and sweat.

But the participation of each in the labors of all is far more perfect in the theoretical sphere than in the material or practical sphere. For what one eats up or wears out, perishes in the using; but thought, ideas, principles, the products of spirit, INCREASE in the using. When you have a new thought, and your neighbor is made the wiser for your imparting it to him, the new truth has two sources of emanation in place of one as before. Instead of being the poorer for having parted with the exclusive possession of your truth, you really are richer; for by explaining your doctrine to others you learn to understand it better yourself. This second mode of combination is therefore better than the first.

These two forms of combination—the practical and the theoretical—are the modes in which man the animal becomes man the spirit, and each individual becomes a conscious participant of the life of the entire race.

EDUCATION--ITS FUNCTION.

It is not necessary for each member of the human family to repeat in detail the experiments of all his predecessors, for their results descend to him by the system of combination in which he lives, and by education he acquires them. With these he may stand on the top of the ladder of human culture, and build a new round to it so that his children after him may climb higher and do the like.

The mere animal, lacking the power of generalization, cannot amass experience, but strictly confined to the

dreamy life of the senses, and never rising to the region of abstract ideas, each individual animal matures and dies. Only the species lives on; there is no immortality for the individual animal. It requires a being who can combine in himself the product of his entire species by his individual activity—just as man can—to fulfill the conditions of immortality.

EDUCATION, as embracing this form of active combination with the race, characterizes human nature and distinguishes it from animal nature. By it man is a *progressive* being, and his progress consists in subordinating the material world to his use, and freeing himself from the hard limits that hem in all natural beings.

The nations and peoples of the world rank high or low in the scale according to the degree in which they have realized this ideal of humanity. The rude tribes of central Africa and the Polynesian Islands stand at the foot of the ladder. The Oriental peoples have achieved a higher degree, though still very defective. Where the individual is unsafe from the freaks and caprices of the ruler or superior in rank, nothing can compensate for the uncertainty of his life and possessions. Arbitrariness in the governing principle is an essential ingredient thereof, and is only compatible with slavery in the people below it.

Thus it happens that individual good behavior on the part of the ruler is made so important a matter in Oriental books. Read Saadi, or Fir-dusi, Confucius, or Mencius, the code of Manu, or the Hitopadessa, and you find everywhere the behavior toward others, the conduct of life, as

individual members of society, the theme. The most excellent maxims, like the golden rule of Confucius, are the staple of Oriental books, and why? Because the behavior of the individual is the essential thing. Humanity had not yet built up a wall around the individual such as to protect him from his own caprice and arbitrariness. With the ancient Greeks and Romans great progress was made over the highest Asiatic people. But it is in modern times that we have achieved the miracle in this respect. For what do our modern Christian States signify, except the realization of constituted forms under which each shall reap only the positive results of all, and that each one who does evil (is wicked and arbitrary) shall *not* injure the rest, but shall himself suffer for his own sins. It is the great heritage of the man born now that he can be protected by the forms of society and state in the enjoyment of his own labor. If he do good, positive deeds in the community, he shall get back the same from the rest; but if he works against the good of the community, he finds himself at once cut off from receiving good from it.

#### ROUSSEAU, AGAIN.

These aspects of the State and of institutions generally, were not seen by Rousseau, nor by the chief thinkers of his time.

When Rousseau sent a copy of his essay on "The Origin of Inequality among Men," to Voltaire, the latter exposed its fallacy in the following sarcastic style: "I have received your new book against the human race, and thank you for it. No one could paint in stronger colors the

horrors of human society from which our ignorance and weakness promise themselves so many delights. Never has any one employed so much genius to make us into beasts; when one reads your book, he is seized at once with a desire to go down on all fours."

PESTALOZZI.

But Voltaire himself was too exclusively absorbed in pulling down institutions, to exercise any restraining influence. The reactionary current against formulism had set in deep and strong. These ideas became the accepted doctrine in that age of unbelief and intellectual clearing up. In 1798, Pestalozzi unfolded Rousseau's doctrine in his book entitled, "Researches into the Course of Nature in the Development of the Human Race." The first state of childhood being (according to him) the state of innocence and perfection, he represents the social state as the product of artificial conventionality. For external, interested motives men unite to form a state, etc. "They agree to give a part of their unrestricted freedom for the sake of securing certain benefits otherwise not attainable."

Yet we hear it frequently said that Pestalozzi labors to produce on the part of the child "spontaneous activity." But the freedom to do what my arbitrary will dictates, is not freedom, for caprice destroys the work of one moment by that of the next. It is only *self-consistent activity* that can be free. All other is a perpetual self contradiction and perpetually builds up barriers to its own progress. But this self-con-

sistent activity is not possible for the infant nor the savage. It has taken ages to achieve its forms. They are the Laws of the State, the Maxims of Morality, the Conventionality of life, its habits and usages. Nay, more, they are the state-form itself, the Religion, the entire complex of civilization. In these forms alone man can live so as to reap the fruition of his own deed. In any other form he will sow, and some one else will reap. What is done through caprice will be controlled by accident.

The forms of combination by which each individual man is enabled to reap the result of the united effort of the entire community are the out-growth of man's *rational* will as developed not in any particular man but in society as a whole, the product of centuries of experience. The downfall of States, the most terrible ages, full of suffering and horror, these are all "laid up layer above layer in the strata of human civilization," as well as the ages of peace and prosperity which mankind have enjoyed. This great complex of arts and usages, of ideas and institutions, of prescriptions and privileges, which we call civilization, is the great Revelation of Human Nature: its own nature wrought out of the raw material—not in peaceful quiet or passive contemplation, but with agony and sweat of blood.

The idle dream of Rousseau and Pestalozzi, of Basedow and Chateaubriand—before this great social reality which surrounds us—fades into thin air. Its boasted ideal of human nature shrinks into atomic insignificance before the actual fact itself!

The state of nature and the state of culture are antitheses, and all true systems of education must mediate between. The problem is always: how to take the individual as mere animal and elevate him to free manhood. When one starts out—as those theorists did—with the idea that man as individual is the ultimate norm and standard of all right and truth, he reads the page of civilization bottom side up and must needs howl the dismal chant of revolution in the ears of his fellow-men, or else retire within himself to live in his dreams an idyllic life like that painted by Chateaubriand in his *Atala*.

Not the individual as such, with his finitudes and frailties, with his selfishness and exclusiveness, his animal instincts and desires—not the mere animal, is the end and aim of human existence, but rather the individual who sacrifices himself as animal in order to realize in himself the life of spirit. In order to be an *end to himself*, the individual must subordinate himself as a particular person, and make himself a servant of universal ideas such as he finds already formulated in society and the state, in Art, Religion, and Science. Not to be

“ Like dumb driven cattle,” an unconscious laborer in the world, but to be a self conscious, intelligent actor, is man’s birthright and destiny. And when the individual, however humble his calling, has arrived at a comprehension of the necessity that binds the organic system of civilization, and sees that it is only the action of a giant will-power enlightened by the accumulated intelligence of

all individuals—then he not only accepts his lot cheerfully, but rejoicingly, and sees himself, not as a slave in the mill of industry, but as a lord-proprietor for whom all mankind are fashioning the world into shapes of use and beauty. It is the vision of the whole that emancipates the individual. Goethe has expressed this exactly: “ To the narrow mind, whatever he attempts is still a trade, [whether it be shoemaking or preaching the gospel, school teaching or poetizing]; for the higher, an art; and the highest, in doing one thing does all; or, to speak with less paradox, in the one thing which he does rightly, he sees the likeness of all that is done rightly.”

The individual must lose himself in order that he may find himself. He must purify himself in the baptism of institutions and wash off all traces of selfish egotism. And the result of such mediation all comes back to the individual and finds him no longer a mere animal, but a transfigured spirit; not an egotist, but one whose personality is friendly to, and participant in, the labors of all mankind.

#### *Chap. II.—The Present and Future of Education.*

The plausibility of all abstract systems, like those we have been discussing, lies in the fact, that education must *start* with the natural, the ignorant, the raw material. But its business is to elevate the individual *out of* this state of nature as quickly and effectually as possible. From animal instincts and sensibilities, enthralled by his physical necessities,

he must be raised to the status of a reasonable being, who looks before and after, and subordinates all nature to the service of spirit.

Education must elaborate its appliances so as to take firm hold of the pupil. Object lessons to strengthen the attention of the new beginner, conversations and stories, pictures and games—all these have their place in any complete system of pedagogy. The mistake lies in their too great expansion, a danger very imminent in our own rapid intellectual growth. The nervous American child commences this kind of education so early that he is beyond the period of the exclusive appliances of such things before his sixth year, and when he enters the school room, is ready for the serious labor of mastering a text book. The records of our schools show that the majority of children brought up in families where reading is much carried on, can scarcely wait for the school age, but take the matter into their own hands, and learn to read by themselves and what assistance they extort from the elder members of the family.

Milk for babes is a useful and necessary article of diet, but when the teeth grow, solid food is essential for healthy development.

#### ORAL VS. TEXT BOOK INSTRUCTION.

A system of education that professes to begin with oral instruction, and to continue it as the best system, ignores this vital point.

It is a mistake to say that the present great educational systems of Europe follow this plan. Its defects are nowhere so clearly seen as by educators in Prussia, where such men as

Diesterweg and Karl Von Raumer have placed all its phases in the clearest light.

In no country in the world is the printed book more highly valued than in Prussia. Germany originated the art of printing, and it is she that makes the greatest books in science and art, and condenses all the erudition of the world upon any single point. Erudition cannot be gained by oral instruction. All the information that could be given orally by the best of teachers, in a course of ten years, would not suffice to exhaust a single topic, and it would be a very poor substitute for the power a pupil would obtain by mastering one single text book for himself.

But it will be readily granted that text book education begins earlier and forms a more important feature in this country than elsewhere.

The justification for this, I find in the development of our national idea. It is founded on no new principle, but fundamentally it is the same as that agreed upon all the world over. Education should excite in the most ready way the powers of the pupil to self activity. Not what the teacher does for him, but what he is made to do for himself, is of value. Although this lies at the bottom of other national ideas, it is not so explicitly recognized as in our own. It is in an embryonic state in those ; in ours it has unfolded and realized itself so that we are everywhere and always impelled by it to throw responsibility on the individual. Hence, our theory is : the sooner we can make the youth able to pursue his course of culture for himself, the sooner may we graduate

him from the school. To give him the tools of thought is our province. When we have initiated him into the technique of learning, he may be trusted to pursue his course for himself.

Herein is the cause why university education is not so prominent here as in Europe. It is a frequent remark, that we are behind Europe in this respect. It is not denied that we have scholars who deserve respect, but we are told that they do not resort to universities. Nor should they. It is not what we attempt to do here. We do not isolate our cultured class from the rest. It is our idea to have culture open to every one in all occupations of life. Elihu Burritt may learn fifty languages at the anvil. Benjamin Franklin may study Locke, make experiments in electricity, master the art of diplomacy. These are self-taught men, and the self-taught man is our type ;—not the man who wastes his life experimenting to learn what is already known and published, but the man who *reads* and informs himself on all themes, and digests his knowledge into practice as he goes along. A culture for its own sake is a noble aspiration, and it is well to have it advocated at all times. But a culture belonging to a class that rests like an upper layer upon the mass below, who in turn have to dig and spin for them, is not the American ideal—Not at all, even if we do not produce men who devote their whole lives to the dative case, or to the Greek particles. And yet it is the faith of Americans that they will be able to accomplish all that any other civilization can do, besides add-

ing thereto a culture in free individuality to an extent hitherto unattained. A civilization wherein all can partake in the subjugation of the elements, and possess a competence at such easy terms as to leave the greater part of life for higher culture, is the goal to which every American confidently looks.

The common man shall be rich in conquests over the material world of Time and Space, and not only this but over the world of mind, the heritage of culture, the realized intelligence of all mankind.

In modern times the controlling spirit is one of independence of all authority. So it happens in our systems of Public Education that the personality of the teacher is not brought so much in contact with the pupil as formerly. When the patriarchal system prevailed in education, the *ipse dixit* of the pedagogue was all-sufficing. The pupil, in fact, depended almost solely upon the oral instruction of the teacher. Now the tendency is to make the individual independent of the personal teacher and of the university, by means of the printed page and its diffusion in the shape of books and periodicals. Once it was necessary to resort to the university to hear the master speak on his theme, for his knowledge could not be found in books. Indeed, books were not printed, but written by scribes, and for this reason were so costly that the individual could not afford to own them. The university is a place where all collect for one purpose—it has been, in its earlier days, a kind of grand market fair for the traffic in letters. The

manuscripts, scarce and valuable, could be collected at a seat of learning and all who wished to consult them had to take up their residence there. But when the ages of printing came, then books began to multiply so rapidly that private individuals of moderate means, could possess the most valuable treasures of erudition and science. What the hand-press of Faust-Gutenberg was to the toiling scribe, the modern power-press is to the former. The cheapening of books goes on: the day is coming—nay it is here already, when whatever information one wishes to circulate, is committed at once to paper.

Oral instruction, as an exclusive system, loses ground from day to day. The shadow of it is still preserved in Europe, and the imported shadow of it has been set up in this country. But the spirit of the time is too powerful for it: it immediately draws everything into its own form. The Pestalozzian system is now promulgated chiefly through books written in the style of the oral instruction. In these books their authors attempt to preserve their best (most brilliant) moments and free the system from the defects that accompany all systems which are merely extemporeaneous. The individual, in order to make a powerful effort, must reinforce the moment by the hours—he must, by previous and severe preparation, assure himself of a strong and steady flow during the period in which he stands before his school as teacher. Thus it was that even Pestalozzi was compelled to reduce his system to a book containing tabulated

forms and long lists of mere names—the dryest and most soulless species of book ever written. I say SPECIES of book because that individual book has been imitated, and now we have many such in this country—books which, by their minute exhaustiveness in details, cramp the teacher and drive out every trace of spontaneity from him. And yet this prescription of details—it is found *ad nauseam* in the superintendents' school-reports from Maine to California—this prescription of details is found absolutely necessary in order to correct the defects of oral instruction, for arbitrariness and caprice pour in like a deluge and wash away all landmarks. “Unequal is man, unequal are his hours.” To-day the teacher had ample time for preparation, and is feeling well physically; he comes before his class and electrifies every one of them; to-morrow the opposite occurs: his inspiration all gone, some untoward accident deprived him of the necessary preparation, and the exercise benumbs every pupil in his class. Since the pupil is to depend upon the teacher for everything—his thirst for knowledge having to be aroused and then sated too by him—it follows that the teacher is placed in the position of the most ancient of patriarchal rulers. *Everything rests on his shoulders.* When he flags, all goes down.

The man who can make the best book is usually not the best person to teach it. The subject stands in his mind in too synthetic a form. It is the *analyst* who makes the best teacher. Oral instruction is therefore constantly liable to destroy the self ac-

tivity of the pupil—that is to say, the *very merit claimed for it is the one it least accomplishes.* The pupil listens to the teacher's living voice. The first impressions are all he gets, even if he takes notes: it requires *time* to reflect. Our first impressions of things are never the most valuable; for all subsequent observation and reflection carry us deeper, and hence nearer to the truth. The pupil is dragged from one point to another without fully digesting either. But with a text book it is far otherwise. The book in his hand is "all patience." It waits for him to consider and reconsider a difficult passage until he is ready to go on. The statement in the book is a studied, carefully prepared one. The author has spent hours in revising and correcting the defects of the one-sided statement of the minute. He was bound to see all properly related and subordinated—all exhaustive and lucid. The deference of the pupil leads him frequently to take the mere assertion of his teacher without question or demonstration, and thus allows him to be warped into his teacher's whims and idiosyncrasies; it is not so with the text book. The text book has been carefully pruned before printing. It frequently happens that a man would blush to say before the world on a printed page what he unblushingly peaches before his pupils. But the heat of personality departs from the printed page, and the scientific interest increases in proportion. Prejudice gives place to calm circumspection. The page of the book is cool and dispassionate, and if not

conclusive and thorough-going, the student has his remedy in another book. Multiplicity of text books has changed our mode of instruction so that every year there is more consultation of reference books and comparison of different views; and hence still another step is gained by the pupil toward independence of mere external authority. He shall read and compare for himself and form his own opinions, "thus doing his own thinking."

#### SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

Not only is this the land of individuality, but we are living in an age of individuality. That period in which everything intended for the people was digested by the ruling class and handed down to them from above, has well nigh vanished here. It is disappearing fast, even in Europe. The age of the newspaper and the telegraph is not the age of prescription, is not the age of external authority. According to the spirit of the last century, the ruling authority measured out to the people and ordained just how much of this and how much of that should be taught, always, of course, with a view to preserve the existing order of things. A monarchy, aristocracy, or theocracy, found it very necessary to introduce the scheme of external authority early. We who have discovered the constitution under which rational order may best prevail by and through the enlightenment and freedom of the individual, *we* desire in our systems of education to make the citizens as independent as possible from mere external prescription. We wish him to be spontaneous—self-active—self-governing. The gov-

ernment of the United States becomes better in the ratio that the citizen becomes self-directive. With a race of slaves—a race of men where there is *not* “one reasoning brain to every pair of hands,” but only one brain to a whole “gang” of hands—our form of government would prove a mistake. The modern state, as realized here, is a gigantic system of machinery for the prevention of tyranny. Think of the formalities and routines of the legal process in order that the individual officer shall not display his personality in the functions of his office! How carefully our race has learned, through centuries of experience, to separate the total function of the government into three processes, and then to take care that different individuals shall perform these processes. The judge must not be the accuser, nor may the accuser be the judge. The judge may not be the law-maker. The law-maker shall make his laws in accordance with general principles, and not with the particular instance staring him in the face. Besides this, the law-executing power shall be entirely separate from the law-making and law-distributing powers. The man who fulfills either of these functions cannot incur the personal spite and hatred of the criminal, or of the friends of the criminal. The great sieve of government has sifted out personalities and left the purely rational element. In like manner, civil society, with its laws and usages, has sifted out the selfishness from the individual before his results reach the community. The wrath of man is turned into

praise; the selfishness, the greedy avarice, the ambition of the individual, forces him to labor and toil heroically for the community in order to gain those selfish ends. The individual is therefore obliged to renounce his selfishness in the very act of gratifying it. The Christian principle of Renunciation: “He who loses his life for my sake shall find it,” is here grown into the vital organism of society; and it is well to note that the modern state is only the outgrowth, the realization of the Christian idea. So too is the general system of inter-communication established in our civilization. The newspaper and the telegraph weave the net-work through which the idiosyncrasies of selfish bigotry, opinions, conceits and prejudices, are sifted out. Sectionalism and sectarianism vanish before these instrumentalities, and with them disappear the mists of ignorance. The distant is brought near; a kind of omnipresence is attained. The mechanic or common laborer goes to his daily task after reading his morning newspaper, with a consciousness of being a citizen of the world at large; he revolves in his brain the rebellion in China, the earthquake in Chili, the movements of French and Prussian armies, the Council of the Pope, and the last sermon of Brigham Young. Narrowness and meanness are thus eliminated from him, and he becomes a cosmopolitan, a Christian in the most catholic sense of that term.

In our time each family collects its library, counting, it may be, few books, yet these are not insignificant.

A few volumes of Humboldt, or Agassiz, or even of Hugh Miller, open the world of natural history. Shakspeare. Goethe or Homer—a single volume of the works of these world poets is enough to lead the reader into the realm of Phantasy. Grote, Gibbon, or Hume—whoever reads them thoroughly, need not blush for ignorance of History. Then every family owns a Bible, and it is remarkable that the colloquial English—the vocabulary of our language used in common conversation—is to a large extent the same as that used by the translators of the Bible. This fact shows how constantly the people have read that book.

What is the key to the library? What preparation is indispensable for the individual, in order that he may enter into this communion with humanity, and participate with the wisest and best of his race, though sundered far in time or space? *The printed page is the medium, and the capacity to read and understand it is the initiation required to enter into this realm of spirit.* Not the mere ability to read the words of a page, but rather the ability to *study* it, and extort from it its full significance by the crucibles of attention and reflection.

This is the meaning of our system of “text book” education, and it is adapted to the life which the individual must lead in our century. We give the pupil the conventionalities of a perpetual self-education. With the tools to work with—and these are the art of reading and the knowledge of the technical terms employed—he can unfold indefinitely his latent

powers. Of what use would it be to fill or cram him with knowledge of special departments of science while in our schools? How much better this power of getting information when and where he needs it! The attempt to pour into him an immense mass of information, by lectures and object lessons, is ill adapted to make the practical man, after all. Mere oral instruction is at best like the fitting out of an emigrant train with an immense supply of sawn lumber, and a store of grain or flour to last for years. Text-book education, on the contrary, is like loading the train with saw-mills and grist-mills, steam engines and seed-planters and reapers, with a view to make lumber from the forests in the distant home as it shall be needed, and to gather harvests there by the aid of the tools transported thither.

The LIBRARY of modern times is, as we said before, what the University was of old. In the library, and by it, are made the learned men of the present. The pride of America is her self-educated men. All our educated men are in one sense SELF-educated; for we adopt here that system of education which does not so much pour in preconceived theories, and fill up the mind of the pupil with ready-made doctrines, as it trains him in the method of mastering the printed book. With the acquirement of this—and sometimes an earnest mind gets this in a few months at school—the pupil goes forth and carries on his culture independently. Who are our learned men, and how much do they owe of their learning to universities? Even in England,

who was it that wrote the greatest History of Greece the world has produced as yet? Grote was a business man, and had a slight school education to start with; but his volumes have served to instruct the professors of universities concerning the very details of their own special theme!

But the method of teaching? The how to study? We are continually told of the mere memorizing of the words of a book, and of its evil effect. There are, it must be confessed, large numbers of teachers whose teaching is little better than the lifeless revolution of a treadmill. Their influence in keeping the profession of teaching at a low grade of estimation in the community, cannot be counteracted. Whatever they do is in the style of a half-learned trade. They "keep school," or the "school keeps them," and know nothing outside of the book—no, not even that—they do not know what is in the book unless it is open before them. Such teachers are, however, eminent in one thing, to-wit: dogmatism. They crush out every spark of originality in their pupils to the extent of their ability. Since they do not readily command the respect of their pupils, they endeavor to excite their fear. They are apt to become cowardly and cruel, oppressing the weak, but obsequious toward the powerful. These men bring odium on the very name of *pedagogue*. They are instanced by the enemies of our system as the necessary results of text-book instruction. It is supposed by many that these are the proper representatives of what we consider the true standard of pedagogy. It is supposed that

the American ideal of teaching is found in the teacher who sits behind the desk and asks printed questions of the pupils, one after another, and requires the literal answer as it is printed in the book, no variation being allowed; that no explanation is made by the teacher, and no pains taken to ascertain whether the pupils understand what they repeat verbatim. With such a view of our system it is not surprising that Europeans have hitherto cared but little to look into it for a deeper and truer idea. They have supposed that all the evils would vanish at once if our teachers only adopted a different system—the oral method.

A moment's reflection will convince one that the treadmill teacher who "reads no more than what he teaches," would be vastly more injurious to the pupil were he not tethered to a text-book. To what extremities his ignorance and dogmatism would lead can not be readily conceived by those who are not old enough to remember the oldest fashioned school of this country. Those who do remember that school have a vivid recollection of what dogmatism was in the days before text-books had come into frequent use.

The evils of the text-book system, great as they are, are not to be compared with those of the oral method. Even by the *memorizing* plan the pupil is obliged to concentrate his attention and arouse himself to hard work, while by the oral method he does not acquire the habit of *regular systematic* study, even though he may foster brilliant, flashy habits of mind. The true mode of teaching does not

rely upon the memory nearly so much as the object lesson system. The recitation is consumed in analyzing and proving the lesson so as to draw out all its relations and implications. The child shall see what it is while reading a book to have every faculty awake, and to notice all that is contained directly and indirectly in it. After the first lesson the pupil does not skim over the mere surface so confidently. He knows that the teacher will ask more of him. He learns gradually to dive for the hidden essences, and reproduce from the text the whole idea which lived in the author's mind. The parrot repetition is checked—the good teacher will have none of it; the nooks and corners must be all investigated—every possible view implied in the lesson dragged out and discussed before the class—and thus the pupil is transformed into a student who possesses the alchemy to convert dead parchment into sibylline leaves; and, by the spell of mental discipline, to cause the old enchanter who wrought the characters that conceal his thoughts in the mysterious vesture of winged words, again to stand before him and reveal his secret.

Self-determination—the direction of one's own practical endeavor—this I know to be the object aimed at in our schools, not only in the theoretical spheres, but in the sphere of the Will. He is not counted a good teacher who flogs his pupils into good behavior; for all know that such good behavior *upon constraint* is not permanent. The “form of Eternity” is a self-related one. The teacher who elevates his pupils to a feeling

of their own responsibility, is the one that all value. Under him pupils feel that it is a disgrace to allow any one to govern them except themselves, and accordingly they take the matter into their own hands, and become free by acting like freemen. This feeling of responsibility is so remarkably developed in our population that it attracts the first attention of foreigners who visit our shores. It is observable that children, even in earliest infancy, do not rest in that perfect feeling of security which comes from implicit trust in outside protection. The necessity for self-help makes its way into the consciousness of the child before it can fairly walk alone.

The immense weight of responsibility which oppresses the individual causes this influence to descend hereditarily to the children. Indeed, an edict has gone forth to the New World in our Declaration of Independence: “Woe unto that head which cannot govern its pair of hands.” Unto the lower races who fail in this, it reads the sentence: “If you cannot direct your own hands by your own intelligence you only encumber the ground here, and can remain by sufferance in this place only so long as land is cheap. You must move back into the wilderness, like the Indian, or else absorb our culture and become intellectually productive, or else—die out. This is the judgment pronounced by the Anglo Saxon upon the lower races. It seems cruel—nay, the cruelest edict ever proclaimed by a civilized race. It is not the way of the Spaniard: the Frenchman can get along with infe-

rior races; the Spaniard can actually mingle with lower races and lose his identity. But the rule with the Anglo Saxon is otherwise. He does not esteem mere life—animal life as such—worth preserving. It is only intelligent—rational—life that is sacred. But with this cruel alternative he offers to the lower race the highest boon as reward for his efforts in self-culture—he offers him free participation in the freest and highest civil community.

Thus it is that the period of school education is so much more important in America than elsewhere. As a simple creature of habit—with such education as one derives from the family nurture alone—a man stands a poor chance of being highly valued here. Only in proportion to his directive power, is he likely to obtain recognition. We can make a *machine* that will perform mere mechanical labor—one steam engine can do the work of a thousand men. The activity of our citizens is perforce turned into higher channels. The workman in his shop is known to be an American by his quick comprehension of the machinery over which he is placed. He

not only studies to improve the product, but to improve the machine that makes the product. It is the age of comprehension. The back-woodsman can read Plato and Aristotle—it has been done by him. The mechanic can master La Place and Newton. It has been done. Even an American lady, resident in Lowell, Massachusetts, threaded all the intricate mazes of La Place's *Mécanique Céleste*. What lofty goals beckon on the American youth! What teachers we need for the work of their instruction! Not the cramping, formalistic pedants who stifle all enthusiasm in the souls of their pupils, but true living teachers are needed.

The model teacher is a student himself, and because he is growing himself, he kindles in his pupils the spirit of growth—free from narrow prejudices, his very atmosphere disenthralls the youth entrusted to his charge. Animated by a lofty faith, all his pupils reflect his steadfastness and earnestness, and learn the great lesson of industry and self reliance—thus preparing themselves for the life of free men in a free state.

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